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MISSIONARY PAPER,

No. VIII.

MEMOIR OF ASAAD ESH SHIDIAK.

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MISSIONARY PAPER, NO. VIII.

MISSIONARY BIOGRAPHY.

It is the design of this Paper to give a Biographical Sketch of ASAAD ESH SHIDIAK, a convert to the Protestant faith in Syria, written chiefly by himself, and by his friend and patron the Rev. Isaac Bird, missionary to that country.

BRIEF MEMOIR OF

ASAAD ESH SHIDIAK;

AN ARAB YOUNG MAN, OF THE MARONITE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

SECTION I.

Birthplace, family, education, and employment of Asaad—he is dismissed from the service of the Maronite patriarch—employed by Mr. King—attempts to answer Mr. K.'s Farewell Letter—perceives errors in the Roman Catholic church—is commanded by the patriarch to leave the missionaries and obeys—returns to Mr. Bird—progress of his opinions.

ASAAD ESH SHIDIAK was born in the district north of Beyroot, called Kesruan, where, and at Hadet, a small village five miles southeast of Beyroot, his family have ever since lived.* This family now consists of the widowed mother, five sons, (of whom Asaad is the third,) and two or three daughters. At about the age of 16, he entered the college of Ain Warka, and spent a year and a half in studying grammar (Arabic and Syriac,) logic, and theology. After this he passed two years teaching theology to the monks of a convent near Hadet.

* Mr. King thinks Asaad must have been, in 1827, about thirty years of age. Of course he was born about the year 1797.

He was also, for a considerable time, scribe to the bishop of Beyroot, and also to the patriarch, the latter of whom was a teacher in the college when Asaad was a student. During a rebellion, headed by the shekh Beshir, a mere complimentary letter of Asaad's written to one of the disaffected party being intercepted, and shown to the emeer Beshir, his suspicion was excited, and he wrote immediately to the patriarch, in whose employ Asaad then was, to dismiss him from his service. The letter of Asaad was produced, and though it was seen to contain nothing exceptionable, the patriarch thought proper to dismiss him without ceremony.

The dispensations of Providence often seem afflictive when they happen, and most benevolent afterwards when their design is perceived. So it was in the case of Asaad. Being thus cast out upon the world by those who ought to have befriended him, he applied to Mr. King for employment as his instructor in Syriac, and was accepted. Though a young man, Mr. King pronounced him to be one of the most intelligent natives whom he had met with on Mount Lebanon.

"At that time,"—Asaad says, in a statement he drew up of his reasons for leaving the Romish communion,—"I was very fond of engaging with Mr. King in disputatious conversations, to prove him to be in error; but with none but worldly motives, to display my talents and knowledge and acquire the praise of men. After this, I applied myself to reading of the word of God with intense interest. Now this person wrote a Farewell Letter to his friends, in which he excuses himself from uniting with the Roman Catholic church. After reading this letter, I found in the holy Scriptures many passages which made against the opinions of the writer. These passages I selected, and from them and other evidences composed a reply to him. But when I was copying the first rough draught of the same, and had arrived to the last of the objections, which he said prevented his becoming a member of the Roman Catholic church, viz. that the Roman Catholic church teaches, that it is wrong for the common people to possess or to read the word of God, but that they ought to learn from the popes and councils, I observed the writer brings a proof against the doctrine from the prophet Isaiah, viz.

‘To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to my word, it is because there is no light in them.’

“While I was endeavoring to explain this passage according to the views of the Roman Catholic church, with no other object than the praise of men and other worldly motives, I chanced to read the 29th chapter of Isaiah from the 15th verse to the end. I read, and was afraid. I meditated upon the chapter a long while, and feared that I was doing what I did with a motive far different from the only proper one, viz. the glory and the pleasure of God. I therefore threw by my paper without finishing the copy, and applied myself diligently to the reading of the prophecy of Isaiah. I had wished to find in the prophets plain proofs, by which to establish, beyond contradiction, that Jesus Christ is the Messiah so long expected from ancient days;—proofs that might be made use of in answer to Moslems and Jews. While I was thus searching, I found various passages that would *bear* an explanation according to my views, but did not find them sufficient to enforce conviction on others, until I finally came to the 52d chapter 14 verse, and onward to the end of the next chapter.

“On finding this testimony, my heart rejoiced and was exceeding glad, for it removed many dark doubts from my *own* mind also. From that time, my desire to read the New Testament, that I might discover the best means of acting according to the doctrines of Jesus, was greatly increased. I endeavored to divest myself of all selfish bias, and loved more and more to inquire into religious subjects. I saw, and continue to see, many of the doctrines of the Roman Catholic church, which I could not believe, and which I found opposed to the truths of the Gospel; and I wished much to find some of her best teachers to explain them to me, that I might see how they proved them from the holy Scriptures. As I was reading an appendix to a copy of the sacred Scriptures, printed at Rome by the Propaganda, and searching out the passages referred to, for proving the duty of worshipping saints and other similar doctrines, I found that these proofs failed altogether of establishing the points in question, and that to infer such doctrines from such premises was even worthy of ridicule. Among other things, in this appendix, I found the very horrible *Neronian* doctrine, *that it is our duty to destroy*

heretics. Now every one knows, that whoever does not believe that the pope is infallible, is a heretic in his opinions.

"This doctrine is not merely that it is *allowable* to kill heretics, but that we are *bound* to do it. From this I was the more established in my convictions against the doctrines of the pope, and saw that they were the doctrines of the ravenous beast, and not of the gentle lamb. After I had read this, I asked one of the priests in Beyroot respecting this doctrine, and he assured me, that it was even so as I had read. I then wished to go to some place, though it might be a distant country, that I might find some man of the Roman Catholic church sufficiently learned to prove the doctrine above alluded to.

"After this, as I was at Beyroot teaching a few Greek youths the Arabic grammar, I received a letter from his holiness the Maronite patriarch, saying, that if I did not cease from all assistance whatever to the English, and that if I did not leave them within one day, I should, *ipso facto*, fall under the heaviest excommunication.

"Thinking, as I did, that obeying my superiors in all things not sinful, was well and good, I did not delay to leave, and so went to my friends at Hadet; but still thinking very much on the subject of religion, so that some people thought me melancholy. I loved exceedingly to converse on religious subjects; indeed I took no pleasure in any worldly concerns, and found all worldly possessions vain. After this I received a second letter from his holiness the patriarch, in which he said thus;—'After we had written you the first letter, we wrote you a second; see that you act according to it. And if you fulfil all that was commanded in it, and come up to us when we come to Kesruan, we will provide you a situation.' But I saw that nothing, in which I was accustomed to take delight, pleased me any longer. I returned again, after some time, to Beyroot."

Asaad went home on the 15th of November, 1825, and returned on the 12th of December, risking whatever obloquy and violence might come upon him. For his greater security, a written protection from the English consul was procured for him, which ensured to him, while in the immediate employment of Mr. Bird, all the safety and liberty of an English resident. He was Mr. Bird's instructor in Arabic.

About the close of the year 1825, Asaad became satisfied with the proofs that the books of the Apocrypha* were not given by inspiration of God, and employed himself in searching the Scriptures with such an intensity of interest, as to leave him neither time nor relish for any thing else.

In January 1826, Messrs. Bird and Goodell questioned Asaad closely with regard to the state of his heart, and were rather disappointed at the readiness with which he replied, that he thought he was born again. They could hardly believe that he had yet, even *speculatively*, very clear notions of the nature of regeneration.

In the evening of the same day, an acquaintance of his, who had expressed great friendship to him, and pretended to lament very much that the patriarch and priests had so much sway, came to give Asaad a last serious admonition. "This," said he, "is the last time I intend ever to say a word to you on the subject of religion. I wish, therefore, before you go any farther, that you would pause, and think whether you can meet all the reproach of the world, and all the opposition of the patriarch and priests."

Asaad replied, that he had made up his mind to meet all these things. "And now," said he, "if as you say, you intend never to hold any more conversation with me on the subject of religion, I have one request to make of you, and that is, that you will go and make the subject of religion a matter of serious prayer and inquiry, and see where the path of life is; I then leave you with your conscience and with God."

After relating the substance of this conversation, Asaad remarked, that these people reminded him of the late patriarch such an one, who had a moderate share of understanding, but was ambitious to appear very well. This patriarch had a bishop, who was really an acute and learned man, and whose opinions were always received with the greatest deference on all matters relative to religion? The bishop being on a visit one day at the patriarch's, the latter called him to his presence, and proposed to him the interpretation of a passage of Scripture. The bishop gave the explanation according to the best of his judgment.

* The papists receive these books as of equal divine authority with the canonical books of the Old Testament.

"No," said his holiness, "that is not the meaning of the passage;" and proposed to have a second. When the bishop had given his opinions and reasons, the patriarch answered as before, "That is not the meaning of the passage." In a third and fourth case the bishop was equally unfortunate, all his arguments being swept away by the single sage remark of his holiness, "That is not the meaning of the passage." At last the bishop, in a fit of discouragement, said, "Your holiness has put me upon the solution of a number of questions, in all which, it seems, I have been *wrong*. I would now thank your holiness to tell me what is *right*." The patriarch being startled at the new ground he was on, changed the conversation.—"So," said Asaad, "these people can all tell me I am mistaken; but when I ask them what is *right*, they are silent."

Asaad often remarked, that he was full of anxiety, and found no rest for the sole of his foot. In many things he saw the Romish church to be wrong, and in some things he thought the missionaries so. Their apparent tranquillity of mind, was a matter of surprise to him. "I seem," he said, "to be alone among men. There is nobody like me, and I please nobody. I am not quite in harmony with the English in my views, and therefore do not please them. My own countrymen are in so much error, I cannot please *them*. *God* I have no reason to think I please; nor do I please *myself*. What shall I do?" Asaad observed, that whatever might be said, and whatever might be true, of the *object* of the missionaries in coming to the country, he saw that the *doctrines* they taught were according to truth, and he was more than ever determined to hold to them.

He wished to have another interview with the patriarch, that he may tell him his whole heart, and see what he would say. The patriarch was not, he said, of a bad disposition by nature, and perhaps if he could be persuaded that he (Asaad) was neither acting from revenge nor from love of money, but simply from a conviction of the truth, he would be softened in his feelings, and something might be done with him for the benefit of religion. He desired among other things, to propose, that an edition of the New Testament should be printed under the patriarch's inspection at Shooair, the expense of which (if he chose,)

should be borne by the English. This he actually proposed, but the patriarch would not listen to the proposal a moment.

SECTION II.

The patriarch again urges him to leave the missionaries—he goes to Der Alma—interview with the patriarch—goes to the college of Ain Warka—conversation with a priest—visits the convent of Bzumar—interview with the Armenian patriarch, and with a monk—returns to Ain Warka—goes to Der Alma—proposes that the gospel be regularly preached among the Maronites—is deprived of the New Testament and other books, and threatened by the patriarch.

A regular excommunication against Asaad was daily expected from the patriarch; but instead of that, on the 6th of January Nicholas, a priest and also a brother to the patriarch, arrived with a request from the latter to come to him, and a promise of a situation in some office in case of his compliance.

Asaad's account of this event is as follows.

“Priest Nicholas began to converse with me in the way of reprimand, for being in connection with the English. I replied that, as we ought not to deny the unity of God because Mussulmans believe it, so we ought not to hate the gospel because the English love it. He then began to tell me of the wish of his holiness the patriarch, that I should come out to him, and of his great love to me; and said that he (the patriarch) had heard, that I had received thirty or forty purses of money from the English; and he assured me of their readiness not to suffer this to be any hindrance to my coming out from them.

“He then gave me a paper from his holiness the patriarch, in which he says,—‘You will have received from us an answer, requesting that when we come to Alma you will come up and see us. We expect your presence, and if God please, we shall provide you some proper situation with an income that shall be sufficient for your sustenance. Delay not your coming, lest the present happy opportunity should pass by.’ Knowing, as I did, that many people supposed my object in continuing with the English, to be gain, I did not delay fulfilling the request of his reverence, hoping to remove this suspicion, and to enjoy an opportunity of speaking the truth without being hired to do it.”

When his missionary friends were informed of what had occurred between this priest and Asaad, and of Asaad's intention to go and see the patriarch, they expressed their fears that he would be ill treated; but he did not anticipate it. He said, he had known an instance of a vile infidel and blasphemer, who was simply excommunicated, and that it was not the custom of the Maronites to kill, as was suggested, on account of religion. They assured him, that he had not yet learned how much men hate the truth, and that his church would not feel herself half as much in danger from an open blasphemer, as from an active lover of the gospel. But he was so confident that good would result from such a visit, that they ceased from urging their objections, and commended him to the will of God.—Asaad now continues his own history.

“About the 7th of January, I left Beyroot with priest Nicholas, and arrived at Der Alma the same night. His holiness the patriarch was not there. On the next day, when he came, I met him and saluted him in the road. In the evening he called me into his chamber, and began to ask me questions, that he might discover what I was; and I answered him, telling him the whole truth, although this course was opposed to my personal convenience. At this he seemed surprised, for he must have perceived, that it was contrary to what he had been accustomed to see in me. Afterwards, when I declared to him that I never had before been a believer, according to the true living faith, he was probably still more astonished. He then asked me, if I believed as the Romish church believed. I again told him the truth, that I did not. He asked me then what was my faith, and I answered to the following purport: ‘True and living faith must be divine, connected with hope, love, and repentance, and that all these virtues are the gift of God, &c.; that I believed the truth as God had inspired it; and that it would be but a lie, if I should say that I believed as the Romish church does, when in fact I do not. I must have proofs.’

“After some conversation like this, he told me that this doctrine of mine was heretical, and that as long as I remained in this state of opinion, he would suffer no one to have intercourse with me in buying, and selling, &c. This prohibition of his brought to my mind the words in the

Revelation, xiii. 17.* Then he gave me to understand, that if, after three days, I did not get back out of this state, I must no more enter the church. At other times he wished me to swear by the eucharist, and by the gospel, that my faith was like the faith of the Roman Catholic church. He asked me if I was a Bible-man; I replied, 'I do follow the opinions of the Bible-men; but if you think me a Bible-man on account of the opinions I have advanced, very well.'

"The sum of what I said was, that without evidence I could not believe what the Romish church believes. From that time, after three days, I did not enter the church for a space. Some time passed again, and the patriarch inquired of me my faith. I then explained to him what I believed respecting the unity and trinity of God, and that the Messiah was one person with two natures, and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Then arose a disputation about who is the vicar that Christ has appointed to explain his law. I answered in substance, as I afterwards did in writing, 'that by reason, and learning, and prayer to God, with purity of motive, we may know, from the holy Scriptures, every thing necessary to our salvation.' This was the purport of my reply, which perhaps was not expressed with sufficient clearness, or perhaps I was not able to say it in the manner that was appropriate; for such a tumult and storm was excited in the company, that they seemed to me to be intent on overcoming me by dint of vociferation, rather than by argument, and to drown my voice, rather than to understand my opinions.

"When, after some days, came bishop Abdalla Blabul and padre Bernardus of Gzir, the patriarch one day called me to them in his chamber, and asked me what I wished, whether money, or office, or whatever it might be, promising to gratify me, speaking of his love to me, and of his great interest in my welfare. These professions I knew to be sincere, but they are according to the world, and not according to the gospel. I assured him that I wanted nothing of the things he had mentioned; that I was sub-

* "He causeth all.....to receive a mark," &c. "and no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark or the name of the beast." The patriarch was also clothed in scarlet, like the woman on the scarlet colored beast.

missive and obedient to him; and that if he thought of me that I had taken money of the English, he was welcome to shut me up in my chamber as in a prison, and take from me every thing that I possessed; that I wished from them merely my necessary food and clothing, and that I would give them this assurance in writing. The bishop and priest then begged me in presence of the patriarch, to say that my faith was like that of the Romish church. I replied, that I feared to tell a falsehood, by saying a thing, while actually, in my reason, I did not believe it.

“ ‘But,’ said they, ‘the patriarch here will absolve you from the sin of the falsehood.’ I turned to the patriarch, and put the question, whether he would so absolve me. He answered, that he would. I said, ‘What the law of nature itself condemns, is out of the power of any man to make lawful.’ He then again asked me what I wished to do. I said I wished to go and see the Armenian patriarch Gregory, and inquire of him what I ought to do. He consented, and requested me, when I had done this, to return to him, to which I agreed. I was accompanied by a priest from the station of the patriarch, to the college of Ain Warka, where I found priest Joseph Shaheen, with whom I conversed a considerable time, and with great pleasure; for I found that for himself, he did not believe that the pope was infallible in matters of faith, that is to say, unless in concert with the congregated church. I then began to confess to him: but when I saw that he held steadfastly some opinions for no other reason than that the church so believed, and that without bringing any proper evidence of the fact, viz. from councils or from the fathers, and burst out upon me with exceeding bitter words, saying, ‘Know that the church neither deceives, nor is deceived, and be quiet;’ and when I wished him to instruct me according to the word of God, with the simple object of glorifying God, and fulfilling his will, I saw that he was not disposed to support any opinion, because it was according to the word of God, but because so thought the church; and I saw him also ready to retain these opinions, although I should bring the strongest evidences against them from the holy Scriptures. He told me that it was impossible for him to teach any thing contrary to the Council of Trent. So I found I could not receive his system, because, though you

should show him that it was wrong, he would not give it up, lest with it he should be obliged to give up his office. I therefore told him, 'You are bound, i. e. shut up as between walls, by the doctrines of the pope and the Council of Trent.'

"In conversation on the images, he would have proved their propriety from Baronius's church history. We found this author quoting the sacred Scriptures to prove that our Savior sent a picture of himself to the king of Abgara. I declared that it was false, in so far as he stated that the *Gospel*, made any such statement, and on that account I could not believe the story. To this he gave me no answer. After this, as we were reading this book, and found a statement respecting the bishops collected in Constantinople, to the number of 313; that they decreed the abolition of the use of images, because it was idolatrous, and that in the clearest terms,—I asked him the question, 'If an assembly composed of the bishops of the church were infallible, how is it that this council is said to have committed an error.'

"About this time, I heard that a certain individual wished to converse with me on the subject of religion, which rejoiced me exceedingly, and I was impatient for an interview. He came on a Sabbath day to Ain Warka, for the study of Arabic grammar, according to his custom, and we had a short conversation together on works unlawful on the Sabbath day, and other subjects. He then excused himself from further conversation for want of time; but promised that when we should meet again, he hoped to have a sufficient opportunity to dwell on these subjects at large. I continued at Ain Warka the whole week, reading with the rest at prayers, and confessing to priest Joseph above mentioned; and on the next Lord's day, the Armenian priest aforesaid came again and I fully expected to have time and opportunity to ascertain his opinions: but I was disappointed again; for he wished to have the dispute carried on in writing, and to have an assistant with him, with other conditions.

"In these circumstances I failed of my object; but was on the whole more inclined than before to receive the doctrines of the Romish church; since the priest had promised to bring his evidence, on all points, from the word of God,

that they (the papists) were walking in light, and not in darkness.

“At this time one informed me, that his holiness, bishop Jacob, superior of the convent of Bzumar, wished to see me. And because priest Joseph at first told me that this state into which I had fallen, was a temptation of Satan, and at one time shewed me that it was usual for people, when they came to the age of manhood, to be tempted on the subject of their religion, and, at another, assured me that this was a state of delirium: and again, because, I had heard formerly, that this bishop Jacob had himself been delirious, and that he was a man of information, I wished very much to see him; and on the same day I went to priest Joseph and declared to him plainly my opinions, and shewed him that the beast mentioned in the Revelation was a figure, as the lamb evidently was, and how dreadful must be the torments of those who worship the image of the beast. I then disclosed to him my intention of going up to the convent of Bzumar, where were the patriarch Gregory, bishop Jacob, and the Armenian priest already mentioned. I set off the same day, and on my arrival saluted the patriarch, and on the same night reasoned on the subjects of faith, hope, and love. It appeared that the patriarch’s opinion was, that a man may be possessed of living faith, faith unto salvation, although he should feel nothing in his heart. I answered him with a quotation from St. Paul; ‘With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.’ But this did not convince him. He explained the *heart* to mean the *will*. It then appeared to me that he was not a true believer; and from that time forward I could not believe him, as I would believe a real Christian; but I wished to hear his worldly arguments. On the following day, I asked him how it can be said, that the pope was infallible, if there were no proofs of the fact to be brought. I asked him if this pretension of the pope was that of an apostle, or a prophet? If an apostle, or a prophet, he could not be believed without miracles, and that we Christians were not to believe any one, though he were to bring down fire from heaven.* His replies to me were

* See Rev. xiii, 13.

weak, and after considerable conversation on what is the church of Christ, on the ignorance that is pardonable, etc. he began to prove, that if the pope is not infallible, then there is *no religion, no gospel*, and even *no God*. But I observed all his proofs so weak, that I could not be convinced, and I fell into deep perplexity as to what I should do. For, sometimes I greatly endeavored to submit my judgment to his rules and opinions, and made these efforts until my very head would ache. The next day I asked him what was that *great city*, ruling over the kings of the earth, mentioned in the Revelation xvii. 18. After he had brought his book of commentaries, he answered that it was Rome, which is also called spiritual Babylon, or Babel; and after wishing me to yield to his opinion, or that of the book, he said nothing more.

“From this time I was with the patriarch every day for three or four hours, and his best advice to me was, to pray to St. Antony of Padua, together with one repetition of the Lord’s prayer, and one of Hail Mary, &c. every day for three days. When I was thus in doubt from the weakness of their proofs, one of the monks said to me, ‘If you wish to know *good tobacco*, ask the patriarch.’ I hoped that this priest would explain to me those doctrines of the Romish church, which I could not believe; so I went into his chamber and questioned him very particularly on all points. He expressed his wish that we might discuss together all the points one by one, but on condition that the patriarch Joseph should appoint him to do so. He told me he had in his possession a book refuting the opinions of Luther and Calvin. I begged permission to read it; but he refused, telling me that the doctrines of the church all remained unrefuted. He wished me to go down to the patriarch Joseph on this business. So after a stay of four days from my arrival, I departed for Ain Warka, according to my promise to priest Joseph.

“Here I found one of my friends, of whom I had heard that he had been very much astonished at my connection with the Bible-men. After I had seen him and had conversed a little on some points, he would no longer hear me, fearing among other things lest he should be crazed. When we touched on the subject of the great city above mentioned, he told me that he had seen a book of commentaries on the

Revelation, which made the city clearly to be Rome. At this I wondered greatly, since the meaning was so clear that not even the teachers of the Romish church herself could deny it. I then finished my confession to priest Joseph Shaheen, and about sunset, the same day, went down to the patriarch to the convent Alma.

"He requested me again to write a paper, stating that my faith was according to the faith of the Romish church. From this I excused myself, begging that such a thing might not be required of me, for the Council of Trent had added nothing to the rule of faith, which was established by that of Nice, which begins, 'I believe in one God,' &c. A short space after, I gave him my advice, with modest arguments and mild suggestions, on his duty to cause the gospel to be preached in the church among the Maronite people, and offered him the opinion, that this should be done by the priest in the vulgar language, every Sabbath day, for the space of one or two hours; and if this should appear too burthensome to the people, to take off from them some of the feast days. After this, I remained silent in my chamber, near to his own; and as there came to me a few of the deacons of the patriarch and others, I read to them, at their request, in the New Testament printed in Rome. But in a little time after, I entered my room and found in it none of all the books that had been there, neither New Testament nor any other; and I knew that the patriarch had given the order for this purpose, for he reproved me for reading the gospel to them, but he could accuse me of no false or erroneous explanations, or that I taught them any thing heretical.

"One day after this, he called me to his presence, and began to threaten me in a most unusual manner. I said 'What do you wish of me, your reverence? What have I done, and what would you have me do? What is my sin, except that I conversed with some individuals, shewing them the errors of the church of Rome?' Then he requested me again to say, that I believed as did that church, and said, grasping me firmly by the chin, "See how I will take you if you do not repent." I begged him to appoint some one to shew me the truth, by way of discussion, but he would not, and continued expressing his own sentiment, that we are bound to hold fast to the church, even to such

a length that if she should even reject the gospel, we should reject it too.

"And here I wish to say a word to every reader that regards and loves the truth, How does such doctrine appear to you? and how could I believe in all which the Romish church holds, without *knowing* all of it? and how could I say, without a lie, that I believe, when I do not believe?

"When I saw the patriarch breaking out in an exceeding loud and unusual voice, I was afraid that I should be found among '*the fearful*,' (Rev. xxi. 8,) and rose to depart. When I reached the door, I turned and said to him, 'I will hold fast the religion of Jesus Christ, and I am ready for the sake of it to shed my blood; and though you should all become infidels, yet will not I,' and so left the room."

SECTION III.

Letters to Mr. Bird—Asaad is forcibly detained—occasions of wonder—the bishop of Beyroot—written discussion with the patriarch and bishop—Asaad again proposes that the gospel be preached in the churches—discussion respecting the eucharist—he escapes and returns to Beyroot—sensation at the convent—noble resolution of Asaad.

Two days after Asaad had arrived at the convent of Alma, he wrote to Mr. Bird in the manner following.—
"I pray God the Father, and his only Son Jesus Christ our Lord, that he would establish me in his love, that I may never exchange it for any created thing—that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor riches, nor honor, nor dignity, nor office, nor any other thing in creation may separate me from this love."

On the 22d of February, Messrs. Bird and Goodell, fearing for the safety of Asaad, sent a messenger to ascertain his state. The next morning this messenger arrived at Der Alma, and chanced to find Asaad alone. After a short conversation, in which they were providentially not interrupted, Asaad handed him a brief and hasty letter to Mr. Bird, in which he says;—"I find myself reduced to quite an extremity. One or more of three things are before me; either to be thought mad, or to commit sin, or to offer up my life. I call upon God for deliverance."

The emeer of that district had threatened to send him to Bteddeen to be imprisoned. Asaad replied, that he was ready to go to prison and to death. He was engaged in daily disputations with the patriarch and others. His countenance was said to wear a shade of melancholy, and his eyes to be red with weeping.

When it was proposed by the messenger to interfere with English authority for his rescue, Asaad said such a course might exasperate his enemies, and cost him his life: it would be better to wait a while, and leave it for Providence to open a way for his escape.

We now resume the statement of Asaad.

“One of my friends told me, that he had suggested to the patriarch the grand reason why I did not believe in the pope, which was, that among other doctrines of his he taught that he could not commit an error, and that now, though a pope should see any one of his predecessors had erred, he could not say this, for fear that *he* also should appear to be an unbeliever. This friend also told me, that the patriarch wondered how I should pretend that I held to the Christian religion, and still converse in such abusive terms against it; and *I* also wondered that after he saw this, he should not be willing so much as to ask me, in mildness, self-possession, and forbearance *for what reasons* I was unwilling to receive the doctrines of the pope, or believe as he did; but he would not consent that the above Armenian priest should hold a discussion with me, and more than this, laid every person, and even his own brother, under excommunication, if he should presume to dispute or converse with me, on the subject of religion.

“Under this prohibition from conversation, and this bereavement of books, from what quarter could I get the necessary evidence to believe in their opinion?

“Another cause I had of wonder, which was, that not one of all with whom I conversed, after he saw me to be heretical and declining from the truth, thought proper to advise me to use the only means of becoming strong in the faith, viz. prayer to God the Most High, and searching his holy word which a child may understand. I wondered, too, that they should ridicule me, and report me abroad as one mad; and after all this, be so fearful to engage in a dispute with a madman, lest he should vanquish them in

argument, or spoil their understandings, or turn them away from the truth.

“After some time came the bishop of Beyroot. I gave him the usual salutation, and was greatly rejoiced to see him, as I knew the excellency of his understanding, and his quickness of apprehension, and hoped that, after some discussion between us, he would explain the truth, and that he would rest on clear evidence to support his views. But in this case, also, I was disappointed; for one day, when I asked him a question, and during the whole short conversation which followed, whenever I began to bring evidence against him, he was angry, and finally drove me from my chamber in a fury, and that for no other cause, as he pretended, than that he did not wish to converse with a heretic.

“Some time after this, priest Joseph Shaheen came down to the convent of Alma, and I endeavored to get him to unite with me in persuading the patriarch to send out among the people preachers of the gospel, or that there should be preaching in the churches as before mentioned. But he would not co-operate with me in this, and I was again disappointed.

“Then, when the patriarch and the bishop of Beyroot wished to dispute with me, I expressed a hope that the discussion might be in meekness and without anger. It was concluded that the discussion should be in writing, that no one should afterwards be able to alter what he had once said. They then commenced by asking me questions. The first question was, in amount this, ‘Has the Messiah given us a new law?’ At first I did not grant that he had, strictly speaking, given us a new law, and quoted the words of John, that ‘the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;’ but when I afterwards saw that by ‘*a new law*’ they meant merely the gospel, or the New Testament, I answered in the affirmative. They then asked me if there were not to be found in this new law some obscurities. I answered, ‘Yes.’ They then asked me, ‘Suppose any difference of sentiment should arise between the teachers of Christianity, how are we to distinguish the truth from the error?’ I answered thus;—‘We have no other means of arriving at the truth, than searching the word of God, with learning and reason, and

inquiry of learned spiritual teachers, with purity of motive, and with disinterestedness of inclination. If the obscurities of the word of God cannot be understood by these means, our ignorance is excusable and will not prevent our salvation. If the passages which still remain obscure concern faith, it is sufficient for a man to say, I believe according as the truth is in itself before God, or I believe in the thing as God inspired it to the writer. And if the obscurity respects our practice, after making use of the means above mentioned, if that branch of our practice be forbidden, or under a doubt, desist from it, but if it is not forbidden, do it, and *blessed is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth.*

"After I had given them this answer, they brought no evidence to prove any error in it; and moreover afterwards never put me any question in writing.

"Once, as I was walking with the bishop of Beyroot, he began to tell me how much they all felt for me; and how unwilling they should be to put me in chains to die a lingering death; and that were it not for their sympathy and their love towards me, there were people who had conversed with them, who were ready to take my life. Some further conversation passed, and I began to introduce the subject of religion, and to ask how we could believe in the pope, that he was infallible. He quoted for proof the words of our Savior, *Thou art Peter, etc.* I asked him if it was proper to suppose that all things bestowed on Peter were also given to the pope? If so, why does not the pope speak with tongues, and why is he not secure from the evil effects of poison, etc.? He answered that these last things were not necessary. 'But how do you prove it necessary,' said I, 'that the pope should not err? Is it not sufficient if any one has doubts, to ask his teacher who is not infallible? If you say *yes*, then the opinion of a fallible man will answer. But if you say *no*, and that we *must* go to the pope, what must become of the man who dies before the answer of the pope can reach him?' He then resorted to another mode of proof, saying, 'Is it not desirable that the pope should be infallible?' I assured him I wished he might be so. 'Well, is not God able to render him so?' 'Yes, He is able to do all things.' He wished to infer his point from these two premises. But I said, your reason-

ing with regard to the *pope* may be applied to all the bishops of the church; for it is desirable that they should all be infallible, and God is able to make them so.' He said, 'No, for the bishops feeling less their need of the pope, would not look to him or submit to him as their head, and thus there would be divisions and contentions in the church.' 'But why,' said I, 'did not divisions and contentions arise among the apostles? Were they not all infallible, as well as Peter?' He would not admit they *were* infallible. I told him it was an opinion that could not be believed, that the pope was infallible and the apostles not: for it is well known to all, that the Holy Ghost descended on the apostles in a peculiar manner. I asked him again, how it could be made to appear that divisions would be produced if all bishops were infallible; for if they were all of one opinion, as they of course would be, their union must be the more perfect.' We conversed farther at some length, when he concluded by saying, 'You are possessed of a devil.'

"The next day, as the patriarch and the bishop of Beyroot were seated under a tree without the convent, I went out to them, and said, 'Your holiness sent for me to come hither for employment, and I came, and have remained here a considerable time. What do you wish me to do for you, for I cannot remain here in idleness?' He said, 'What do you wish to do?' 'If your holiness pleases that I teach in the school of Ain Warka, I will do that.' 'No, I cannot have you go to Ain Warka to corrupt the minds of those who are studying science, and to contradict my opinions.' 'But I will instruct in grammar.' 'No, the youths of the college are now attending to *moral* science.' 'Well, I only beg you will let me know what I am to do; and if you have no employment for me, I wish to return home.' The bishop here broke in upon the conversation, saying, 'I will not suffer you to go back among my flock to deceive them, and turn them away to heresy.' Will you then debar me,' said I, 'from my home? If so let me know where I shall go, and what I shall do.' The bishop then said to the patriarch, 'Indeed, I will not suffer this man to go abroad among my people, for he is even attempting to make heretics of us also.' 'Yes,' replied the patriarch, it will not do after this, to afford him a residence in any part

of the land.' The bishop then turned to me, in the bitterest anger and rage, reviling me and saying, 'If you go among my people again, I will send and take your life, though it be in the bosom of your own house.' I said, 'Well, what would you have me do, and what will you do with me? If you wish to kill me, or shut me up in prison, or give me up to the government, or whatever it may be, I wish to know it.' 'You must wait here till spring or summer,' said the patriarch, 'and then we shall see how you are.' I answered him in the words of that Christian who was given by his judge ten days to deliberate whether he would worship an image: '*Consider the time already past, and do what you please.*'

"I asked the Bishop his reason for wishing to kill me. What evil had I done? He was filled with high and bitter indignation, saying, 'What, miscreant! shall we let you go forth to corrupt my flock for me? Is not what has passed enough?' I rose and said to them, 'God at least is with me,' and left them. The patriarch soon sent after me his nephew, requesting me in soothing words to return, and saying that he would do what I wished.

"But when I contemplated the hardness of heart manifested by the bishop, I could not restrain myself from reproving him, hoping that he would grow mild. I said therefore, 'Our Lord Jesus Christ said, *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, and that Satan, who was in his heart, wished to kill me, for Satan was a murderer from the beginning.' I told him moreover, that he was not a true disciple of Christ. And when I had left them a second time, the patriarch again sent his nephew to inquire of me what I wished; whether it was money, or what else, promising that he would answer my inquiries.

"I returned, and told him I had a request to make of *one thing only*, and that I hoped he would answer me, not as a little child who would ask a childish thing. He asked me what it was. I said, 'I have to ask of you the favor to send from your priests two faithful men to preach the gospel through the country; and I am ready, if necessary, to sell all that I possess to give to them as part of their wages.' He promised me it should be done. But I had reason to expect that he would receive such a request as from the mouth of one out of his reason. Now there

was at the convent a man called priest Gabriel, who was said to be insane, and was known to all his acquaintance as a man that would never say a word on the subject of religion, and he was a scribe of the patriarch, and from the time of my arrival until that day, had never asked me a single question about my faith or opinions; nor had given me the least word of advice about any of my errors. The same night, as this priest was passing the evening in company with the patriarch, bishop, and other individuals, as if they had been conversing on my idiocy in making the request of to-day, the patriarch sent for me to come and sit with them. I came. The patriarch then asked this priest and the others present, if two proper men could be found to go and preach the gospel? They then answered, one to another, such an one and such an one would be the fittest persons, some mentioning one, and some another, looking at me in the mean time and laughing, to see what I would say.

"I smiled in a pleasant manner at all this, and when one asked me why I laughed, I said to the patriarch, 'Have you not perfect confidence in the integrity of the priest Gabriel?' He said, 'Yes.' I then said, 'Pray let this priest then examine me for the space of a few days, and if he does not conclude that I am a heretic, I will, for *one*, take upon myself this duty of preaching.' This remark put an end to the conversation.

"The next day when the bishop wished to mock me before the patriarch and a shekh of the country, I answered his questions according to his own manner; but in a little time he began to revile me, and rebuke me for blasphemy against the eucharist, against the virgin Mary, and the pictures; and that because I had said before one of his deacons, that were it not for fear of the patriarch, I would tear all the pictures in pieces and burn them. I gave him answer to every particular by itself, and when he found that he could produce against me no accusation, he increased in wrath. I then said, 'If this is your pleasure, I will say no more.' I told him that I had said the pictures were not gods; that such was my opinion always; and that I wished to tell all the common people so, that they might understand it. But to this he would not consent. He then began to accuse me of saying of the eucharist, 'Let them smell the

scent of it, and know that it is but bread and wine still.' I told him that if he would give me leave to speak, or if he wished to hear my views, I would speak; 'But how is it that you bring against me accusations, and do not suffer me to make my defence?' Here he again was not willing that I should speak; but the patriarch said to me, 'Speak.'

"I then observed, that St. Ephraim says, 'Come, eat the fire of the bread, and drink the spirit of the wine;' and began to say from this, that our eating the body of Christ was not natural, but spiritual. Then again he fell into a rage against me. I said to him, 'It is written, *be angry and sin not*. I told you before, that I would keep silence and not speak without your consent, and whatever you wish, tell me, that I may act accordingly.' At this the patriarch smiled. But the bishop fell into a passion still more violent against the patriarch, as well as myself, and rose and went away. I also left the room. In the evening, when were collected together the patriarch and bishop and all the monks with priest Nicholas, whom they were about to ordain a bishop on the morrow, the patriarch began to ask me questions respecting my faith. When I saw that their object was neither to benefit me, nor receive benefit, I gave them answers calculated to continue the conversation in a trifling strain, saying, "My faith is the faith of Peter, and the faith of Peter is my faith. I believe all that God has given by inspiration to the one holy catholic church." He asked me, "What is the church?" I answered "The church is the whole company of those who believe in the Messiah and his law, on all the face of the earth." "But where is the place of the church?" "The place of the church is the whole world; it is made up of every nation and people." "What," said he, "the *English* among the rest?" "Yes of the English also." Afterwards when he continued to question me, and I saw that he had no other object than to try me, I assured him, "This is my faith, and to this faith will I hold, whether it is worth any thing in your estimation or not." I then asked him if he was willing to hold a discussion on the subject; but he would not permit it in any shape. He afterwards requested me to tell my faith again without fear and without concealment. I referred them to the priest that was about

to be ordained, saying that I had conversed with him on all points particularly, and that he was able to make answer for me. The priest then bore testimony on the spot, that I had said before him, that I believed the pope to be infallible, while I never said this to him at any time. Afterward, when I was in his company privately, I inquired how he could bear such testimony as he had done. He confessed in the fullest terms, that he knew it was a falsehood, but that he said what he did, that they might cease talking with me. The same night I had resolved on quitting them; so, at about midnight, I left the convent, committing myself to the protection of God, who never deserts them that trusts in him, and arrived at Beyroot on the morning of Thursday, March 2, 1826."

The darkness was such, that he often found himself out of his road, sometimes miring in mud, and sometimes wading in rivers. After some hours of weariness and anxiety, he came to the shore of the sea, where he found a large boat thrown up, under which he cast himself, and obtained a little rest. After this, he continued his walk without interruption, till he reached Beyroot.

The preceding evening had been observed by the missionaries as a season of prayer, particularly on his account, and the meeting in the morning was one of great joy and thanksgiving to all.

When it was first discovered at the convent that Asaad had fled, the patriarch and his train were occupied in the religious services of the morning, so that no great sensation was apparent among them. One individual spoke boldly in favor of Asaad, saying, "Why should he not leave you? What inducement had he to remain here? What had he here to do? What had he to enjoy? Books he had none; friendly society none; conversation against religion abundant; insults upon his opinions and his feelings abundant.—Why should he not leave you?" Others, especially the great ones, pitied the poor maniac, (as they called him,) and sent in quest of him in every direction, lest peradventure he might be found starving in some cavern, or floating in the sea, or dashed in pieces at the bottom of a precipice.

The spirit which animated this young man, has already appeared abundantly in his statement, which has been in

great measure inserted in the preceding pages, and which he drew up at this time at the request of Mr. Bird. It will be made still more apparent, however, by the concluding paragraphs of that document.

"The object in all that I have done, or attempted, or written, in this late occurrence, is, that I may act as a disciple and servant of Christ. I could not, therefore, receive any advice, which should direct me to hide my religion under a bushel. I cannot regulate myself by any rules contrary to those of Christ; for I believe that all who follow his word in truth, are the good grain, and that all those who add to his word, are the tares sown by the enemy, which shall soon be gathered in bundles and cast into the fire unquenchable. And I beg every member of my sect, i. e. of the Maronite church, who loves truth, if he sees me in an error to point it out to me, that I may leave it, and cleave to the truth. But I must request those who would rectify my views, not to do as did a priest at Beyroot, who after a considerable discussion, denied the inspiration of the New Testament. Men like him I do not wish to attempt to point out my errors; for such men, it is evident, need rather to be preached to than to preach, and to be guided rather than to guide. But if any understanding man will take the word of God and prove to me from it any doctrine whatever, I will respect him and honor him with all pleasure. But if a doctrine cannot be established thus, it is not only opposed to the doctrines of Christ, but to the views of the early Christians, the fathers of the church, such as St. Ephraim and others. Such doctrines I cannot confess to be correct, although it should cost me the shedding of my blood. Be it known that I am not seeking money, nor office; nor do I fear any thing from contempt, nor from the cross, nor from the persecution of men, nor from their insults, nor their evil accusations, so far as they are false. For I am ready for the sake of Christ to die daily, to be accounted as a sheep for the slaughter, for he, in that he suffered being tempted, is able to succor those that are tempted. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. I believe that Jesus is our High Priest for ever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood, wherefore he is able to save them

to the uttermost that come unto God by him, for he is the one Mediator between God and man, and he ever liveth to make intercession with the Father for us; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and to him be glory with the Father and his Holy Spirit of life for ever and ever. Amen.

"I would only add, if there is any one, whoever he may be, that will show me to be under a mistake, and that there is no salvation for me unless I submit to the pope, or at least show me that it is lawful to do so, I am ready to give up all my peculiar views and submit in the Lord. But without evidence that my views are thus mistaken, I cannot give them up, and yield a blind obedience, until it shall not only be *told* that I am mad, but until I shall be so in *fact*, and all my understanding leaves me; not until men shall have burned not only the Bibles printed by the English, but all the Bibles in the world."

SECTION IV.

Asaad is visited by relatives—their violence—importunity of his mother—he supposes himself poisoned—returns home—his books are destroyed—Phares comes to the missionaries for protection—Asaad's letter to him—conversation of Phares with the bishop of Beyroot—letter of Asaad to Mr. Bird.

Asaad had not been at Beyroot many days, before he was visited by three of his brothers and an uncle. Mansoor, the eldest brother, was a furious bigot, and regardless of the first principles of religion. The second, Tannoos, or Anthony, the next in age, had been employed as a teacher by Mr. Fisk, and possessed good native and acquired talents, but was envious of his brother Asaad, because, though younger than himself, he was more noticed; and besides, he thought it preposterous to quarrel with bishops and patriarchs on the subject of religion. The name of the third was Galeb, who was younger than Asaad, and possessed a better disposition than the two elder brothers. The uncle was more violent than even Mansoor.

The uncle and the two elder brothers contradicted Asaad, scoffed at him, threatened him, declared him to be mad, possessed with a devil, and so on. Asaad finally consented to go home, provided they would get the patriarch to say in writing, on the faith of a christian, that he would not molest him. "But," said they, "then you must

hold your tongue, and not broach your new opinions among the people." "What," replied Asaad, "must I go and live like a *dumb* man? No, that I will never do. My religion binds me not to do it. I must love my neighbor as myself." "Why do you not go," said they, "to the Druses, and the Moslems, and preach the gospel to them? You answer, because there is danger. So there is danger in the present case; this is not a land of liberty, therefore be silent." "Secure me," replied Asaad, "but the free exercise of my conscience, and I will go with you. My religion is my all, and I must be free in it." To this they replied, "We can give you no such security. Nobody dares go to the patriarch with such a request. You cannot be permitted to publish your notions abroad among the people." "Then," said Asaad, "there is no more to be said;"—rising, and with clasped hands walking the room—"Religion unshackled—Religion unshackled, is my doctrine."

They rose and left the room in angry despair. Mansoor returned, and wished to speak a word with Asaad at the door. In a moment, Asaad returned. "Do you know what Mansoor has told me?" said he. "His last words were, *Even if the patriarch and the emeer should do nothing, if they make no attempts to take your life, be assured, we ourselves will do the work; so take heed to yourself accordingly.*" Asaad was much affected by the interview. As soon as he found himself at liberty, he stepped up into the loft where he sleeps, and threw himself on his couch in prayer.

The next day, Galeb came again, and urged Asaad to leave the missionaries, saying that his connection with them had brought an insupportable shame upon the family. Asaad insisted that the disciples of Christ were to expect such shame as a thing of course, and that therefore it was no argument for leaving the missionaries. Galeb assured him he would be safe at Hadet: but when Mr. Bird asked if Mansoor had not threatened to kill Asaad, Galeb colored, admitted that he had, and soon took leave rather abruptly.

The rest of the family not having succeeded in drawing Asaad away, his mother next came, with an apparent determination to effect her purpose. The missionaries welcomed her with all cordiality, and treated her with all

the respect and attention they could. But all they could do or say did not alter her resolution to get her son away, if in her power. She besought Asaad by the honor he owed her, by the love he professed for her, by his regard for the reputation of her family, for religion itself, and for his own personal safety, that he would immediately accompany her home; and when she found him inflexible, she declared she would never stir out of the house unless he went with her.

To all this Asaad replied, "To what purpose would it be, that I should go home? You wish me to go, you say, that people may be convinced that I am not mad. But you, who come hither, and see and converse with me, say, after all, that I *am* mad. How can it be expected that I should convince others that I am *not* mad, when my own mother will not believe it. Or do you think that if I once get out among you, the air of Hadet will change my opinions, or induce me to be silent? All these are vain expectations. I see no object to be gained. If I should go to Hadet, and be constantly disputing with the people, and telling them that you are all going astray, that you are worshipping idols instead of the living God, that I could wish to tear down every picture in your churches, that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are not Jesus Christ, that I believe the pope to be the beast in the Revelation,* whose business is to deceive the people and ruin their souls;—by all this I should injure your feelings, enrage the people, excite the opposition of the emeers and bishops and patriarchs, and then return here just in the state I am in now."

The youngest brother, Phares, who accompanied his mother, conversed freely and in good temper, and listened with attention to all Asaad's arguments, by which he endeavored to justify his views and determinations. But no argument or evidence could convince the disconsolate mother. Asaad had repeated the name of Christ, and the word of God so often, that she, at last, in a fit of impatience exclaimed, "Away with Christ, and the word of God; what have we to do with them!" and when the missionaries pointed out to Asaad some text of Scripture, which they thought applicable in any case, she would en-

* When he first came to Beyroot, this same sentence was dictated to him, and it appeared in his eyes so much like blasphemy, that he refused to write it.

deavor to close the book, or catch it from him, as if it had taught paganism or witchcraft. During her stay, they dined, and as Asaad took the meat upon his plate, and ate it without a scruple in this season of Lent, it was remarked with what a gaze of wonder she regarded him. She seemed to say in her heart, "All is over—my son is lost!"

After some hours of troublesome expostulation and entreaty, during which Asaad once said he could bear it no longer, and rose and shook Mr. Bird's hand to go, it was finally settled that the mother should go home without him, but that to save the family from the insupportable shame which threatened it, Asaad should give her a paper, stating, in effect, that he was not a follower of the English. When the paper was finished, "Now," said Asaad, "go to your home in peace;" and walked away: but suddenly recollecting himself, he called his brother back, and said, "Phares, I wish you fully to understand, that I love you; and I have one request to make of you, which is, that you will take the New Testament, and read it attentively." "Give me a New Testament," said Phares quickly. A book was given him, and he went his way, evidently affected and softened by the interview.

On the 11th of March, 1826, one of the neighbors brought Shidiak a letter, cautioning him, if he went to the shekh's house, not to smoke or drink with him.—The next day, word came to Asaad that the shekh* was with the family below, and would be glad to see him. Asaad went down, but in a few minutes came up, pale and trembling, and said he was exceedingly dizzy and faint. He had just taken coffee below, attended with suspicious circumstances, and begged to know if he might not be poisoned. Mr. Bird opened a medical book, and explained to him, as rapidly as possible, the symptoms of a poisoned person. 'Oh! these are my feelings,' said he, and fell upon his knees before his seat in silent prayer. An emetic was immediately given him, which operated well, and before night he was relieved of every alarming symptom. The youth who gave the coffee, being sent for, gave good evidence of having had no bad intentions; and notwithstanding many sus-

* This shekh, or sheriff, immediately after Asaad's escape from Der Alma threatened to take his life, in case he continued with the missionaries. Afterwards he promised Asaad his daughter in marriage, on condition of his leaving them. The threat and the promise were equally vain.

picious circumstances, there did not appear evidence of an attempt to poison sufficiently strong to prosecute any public inquiry into the matter.

Soon after, four of the relatives of Asaad came down, and succeeded in persuading him to accompany them home. He said he could not believe, after all that had been said, that they would do him violence, and he strongly expected that his visit at Hadet would do good. He left Beyroot toward evening, expecting to be absent only a few days. Asaad was the more confident of receiving good treatment, as he had, on the day before, received a letter from the patriarch, written in very plausible terms.

On the 24th of March, Phares Shidiak came and wished to speak with Mr. Bird in private. "Yesterday morning," said he, "as I was in my room reading the New Testament, my brother Mansoor entered, drew a sword he had, and gave me a blow upon the neck. I continued with the book in my hand, until one snatched it from me. Mansoor afterwards drew up his musket, threatening to shoot me; but my mother interfered to prevent him. My brother Tannoos hearing a bustle, came in with a cane, and began cudgelling me, without stopping to inquire at all into the merits of the case, calling out, Will you leave off your heresy, and go to church like other people, or not? Mansoor not finding Asaad present, as he seemed to have expected, went to Asaad's chest, which stood near me, seized all the books he had received of you, Hebrew, Syriac, Italian, and Arabic, tore them, one by one, in pieces, and strewed them on the floor. In the course of the day, I came down near where the soldiers of the emeer were encamped, and passed the night in company with my brother Galeb. This morning *he* returned with a line from me to Asaad, and *I* came off to Beyroot, with the full determination never to go home again. And now I will either go to some place in this country where I can enjoy my liberty, or I will take ship and leave the country altogether." As he wished the advice of Mr. Bird, he counselled him neither to go from the country, nor from his home, but to return, and at least to make further trial for doing good to his relatives, and bearing their persecutions. He, however, continued inflexible. In the space of a few hours, Galeb came in search of Phares, with a letter from Asaad, of which the following is a copy.

"To my beloved Phares; the Lord Most High preserve him.—Your departure caused me great grief. *First*, because you were impatient, when trial and persecution came upon you. It is a thing we are regularly to expect, that if we hope in God in this world, we shall give universal offence. But we have another city, for which we hope. Do not lose your courage, for ye have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Remember, we cannot share in the glory of Christ, if we share not also in his sufferings. Therefore rejoice whenever you are tried; rejoice, and never be sad, for our faith is sure. *Secondly*, I was grieved because you gave me no information where you were going, and what you intended to do. Now it is not becoming, that we should do any thing rashly, that is, till we have prayed to God for direction. Come home, then, and let us set apart a season of fasting and prayer to God, and do what is most agreeable to him. Perhaps it is best to let our works preach in silence, in these evil days.

"You must know, that if you fail to come home, you will give us great pain, and this would be inconsistent with love. Jesus says, *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*. You well know how much joy and consolation it would give us to see you; do not then deny us this pleasure, but come at all events. If you do not come, it may be an injury both to yourself and me. I wish to see you, if it be only to say to you two words, and then act your pleasure; for not every word can be said with paper and pen. Farewell.—Your brother and companion in tribulation. ASAAD."

The advice of Mr. Bird, and the solicitations of Asaad and Galeb were not sufficient to persuade Phares to return, and Galeb went away without him. After Galeb had gone, many questions were put to Phares, and he communicated the following particulars, which are related in his own words.

"The day that Asaad and myself left you," he says, "the bishop of Beyroot was at the next house, and I went to salute him. He said to me, 'I understand *you* have become English, too. You *reason* on the subject of religion.' 'But,' said I, 'is every one English, if he *reasons* on that subject?' *Bishop*. 'But you read in the Bibles of the English.' *Phares*. 'Yes, and from whom is the Bible?

is it from the English, or from God? *B.* 'But it is *printed* by the English.' *P.* 'Well, is it altered in any place?' *B.* 'See, now you have begun again to argue on the subject of religion. I tell you, young man, cease this heretical habit, or you are excommunicated.' "

Two brothers of Phares afterwards decoyed him from the house, as if for a walk, and then forcibly prevented his return.

As nothing particular had been heard directly from Asaad since he left, especially since the affair of the books, Mr. Bird sent him a line, and on the 28th received the following reply.

"Dear Sir,—After expressing imperfectly the love I bear you, and the desire I have to see you all in health, I have to say, that in due time your letter came to hand, and I read and understood it. You ask respecting our health. I answer, I am in a state of anxiety, but not so great as some days ago.

"On Thursday last, having come home from a visit to the emeer Sulman, I found the remnants of the Holy Scriptures, torn in pieces, as there is reason to believe, by order of the bishop. When I was told, that my brother Mansoor had done this mischief, I returned to the emeer, and informed him of the affair. He sent to call Mansoor, while I returned again to the house. I now learned that my brother Phares had gone off. After searching for him some time, I went down to the inn in quest of him, but he was not to be found. As I was on my way returning from the inn, where I had gone in search of my brother, I prayed to God, that he would take every thing from me, if necessary, only let faith and love towards him remain in my heart.

"As I proceeded on, a man came up, and gave me information that all the consuls of Beyroot were slain, and that you also were slain with them.* The report came from a man, who said he had deposited goods with you for safety. In order to be the more sure, I asked the man if it were really true, and he again assured me that it was. Ask me not the state of my feelings at that moment.

"On reaching home, I heard this terrible news confirmed, at the same time looking out, and seeing the heap of

* Several Greek vessels came into the harbor of Beyroot at this time, and created great disturbance and alarm.

ashes near the house, all that remained of the eleven copies of the holy Scriptures which my brothers had destroyed, I burst into tears, and committed all my concerns into the hands of God, saying, 'Blessed be his holy name: the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away;'—and so I prayed on, with tears and groanings, which I cannot describe.

"I afterwards heard, that Phares was probably in the neighborhood, and set off to search after him by night, but found him not. When I heard the news of your death confirmed, I sent off a messenger, that wherever Phares might be found, he might return; and when I received his letter, saying that he had gone to your house, I could not yet believe that the report respecting you was false.

"But when the truth on that subject began to appear, then I heard, by a person who came here yesterday evening, that the patriarch and the emeer had made an agreement to kill *me*, and that they had sent men to lie in wait for that purpose. I was afterwards told, by another person, that some of the servants of the emeer were appointed to accomplish this end.

"Here I am, then, in a sort of imprisonment, enemies within, and enemies without.

"All my concerns I commit into the hands of God, who created me. Through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, I hope that all my distresses will be for the best.

"I accept with pleasure all your kind wishes, and send you many salutations in the Lord, and pray for you length of days.

Yours, &c. ASAAD."

After Mansoor, in his papal zeal, had destroyed the Bibles and Testaments in Asaad's possession, the latter could not remain without the Scriptures, but sent and obtained a copy from a small church in the neighborhood, which he daily read, marking the most striking and important passages.

SECTION V.

Asaad is taken by force to the patriarch—his firmness—is ill treated—escapes—and is taken—escapes the second time, but is apprehended and is cruelly used—third escape, apprehension, and abuse—fourth escape and consequent sufferings—his case meliorated.

On the 31st of March information was received, that Asaad had been taken against his will, to the patriarch.

April 4. Phares Shidiak arrived at Beyroot in the evening direct from Der Alma, and said he had accompanied Asaad to that convent a week ago, that Asaad was still there, and that the patriarch, having in the morning set off for Cannobeen, would send down for Asaad after a few days. He then handed Mr. Bird the following line from Asaad.

"If you can find a vessel sailing for Malta, in the course of four or five days, send me word; if not, pray for your brother
ASAAD."

The following facts in relation to this cruel and unnatural proceeding, were related to Mr. Bird by Phares, whose mind, by this time, had become considerably enlightened.

When his relatives, to the number of twenty or more, had assembled, and Asaad perceived they were come to take him to the patriarch by force, he began to expostulate with Tannoos, and besought him to desist from a step so inconsistent with fraternal love. He besought in vain. Tannoos turned away from him with a cold indifference. Affected with his hardness, Asaad went aside, and wept and prayed aloud.

The evening before he was taken away, he said to those who had assembled, "If I had not read the gospel, I should have been surprised at this new movement of yours. But now it is just what I might have expected. In this blessed book, I am told, *the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household*. Here you see it is just so. You have come together to fulfil this prophecy of the gospel. What have I done against you? What is my crime? Allowing that I do take the Bible as my only and sufficient guide to heaven, what sin is there in this?"—During the evening he laid himself down to sleep, as he was to set off early in the morning. But he was often interrupted; for, whenever he caught a word of false doctrine from the lips of those who continued their conversation, he would rise up, refute them, and again compose himself to rest. One of his uncles, speaking of his going to the patriarch, said in a great rage, "If you don't go off with us peaceably we will take your life." Asaad replied, "Softly, softly, my dear uncle, don't be hasty: *blessed are the meek*."

A messenger who had been sent by the missionaries to make inquiries respecting Asaad's situation, brought back word that he had been conducted to Cannobeen, according to the patriarch's intention, and was *kept in close confinement, in chains, and daily beaten*. The great cause of complaint against him was, that he refused to worship either the pictures, or the virgin Mary.

The history of Asaad will now be continued by Naami Latoof, a young shekh of Tripoli, frequently mentioned in the journals of Mr. Bird, by whom Naami's account was translated from the Arabic.*

"When the relatives of Asaad brought him to the convent of Alma, in the district of Kesroan, and gave him up to the patriarch, the latter began by way of flattery to promise him all the worldly advantages he could bestow; but withal demanding that he should put away all the heretical notions, and all the corrupt knowledge, which the Bible-men, those enemies of the pope, had taught him. He replied, 'These things which you hold out to me, are to me of no value. I no longer trouble myself about them, for they are vain and of short duration. Every Christian is bound to think and labor and strive to be accounted worthy to hear that blessed welcome, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*. As to rejecting from my mind those things which I have learned from the Bible-men, I have to say, that, for many years, I had read, occasionally, the holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation, but could not live according to them; for I was given to the indulgence of

* Mr. Bird thus speaks of Naami's account, in a letter dated March 28, 1827.—
"This account of our suffering friend, though by no means complete, may be relied on as authentic, and is by far the most full and satisfactory account which we have been able to obtain. It was sent us, as you will see in the journal, by the friendly young shekh, Naami Latoof, who, sometime previous, spent a few weeks in our families, and whose heart seems to have been touched by the truths of the gospel. The priest, who has proved so great a benefactor to Asaad, is a relative of the shekh, and they have grown up together from childhood on the most intimate terms of familiarity and friendship. Many of the occurrences here related, the priest found written among the monks, who pass their time idly with the patriarch, and to many he was an eye witness. The account was drawn up under his own inspection. He seems a man unusually conscientious for an Arab, unusually open to conviction in argument, and has promised to do his utmost to save Asaad from further abuse, and in the end to deliver him from his state of confinement. Thus while all our own efforts have failed of essentially benefitting the poor man, the Lord, without any of our instrumentality, raised him up a friend from the midst of his persecutors, who saved him from impending death.

all wicked passions: but since my acquaintance with these men, I see myself, through the merits of my Savior, possessed of a new heart, though it is not yet, I confess, in all respects, such as I could wish it to be.'

"During the few days they remained in the Kesroan, the patriarch shewed him every attention, and suffered no one to oppose his opinions, saying, 'The protestants, by the great sums they have given him, have blinded his eyes, and inclined him to join them, and diffuse their poisonous sentiments, so that he cannot, at once, be brought to leave them. Let him alone for the present, do nothing to oppose or to offend him, until we shall arrive at Cannobeen, where we may examine into his faith and state at our leisure, and if we find that he still clings to his heresy, we then can do with him as circumstances may require.' After a short time, they proceeded with him to Cannobeen, and there began to use arguments to convince him of his errors, and persuade him to confess and forsake them, and embrace whatever the councils and the church had enacted;—requiring that he should surrender his conscience to the holy Catholic church, and bless all whom she blessed, and curse all whom she cursed; and this they did in the most stern and threatening manner. He replied, It has been said by the mouth of the Holy One, *Bless and curse not*. They still pressed him to yield his opinions, but he said, I can give up nothing, nor can I believe any thing but as it is written in the holy Scriptures; for in these are contained all doctrines necessary to salvation.—But, said they, is every thing, then, worthless, that has been ordained by the councils and the fathers? He answered, The councils may have enacted laws good for themselves, but we are not bound to follow them.

"After urging him, day after day, to no purpose, they finally asked in despair, 'Are you then still of the same sentiment?' 'Of the same sentiment,' said he; 'I still believe and hold whatever is written in the holy Scriptures, and neither more nor less.' 'Will every one, then, who reads the gospel, be saved?' 'By no means;—but as it is written, *he that hath my commands and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*.' 'Is it the duty of every person to possess the gospel, and read it?' 'Yes it is the duty of every one. For, said Paul, *if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath*

blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them.' They then reviled him, and spurned him away from their sight, and began to meditate measures of violence against him. He was separated from all around him, and compelled to take his meals by himself; and lest he should attempt to escape, a person was set over him to keep him under a constant watch. He was made to feel himself in the lowest state of disgrace, all taking the fullest liberty to reproach and ridicule him.

"From this state of debasement he soon began to meditate his escape. Accordingly, one evening, just as the sun had set, and while his keeper's eye was off him, he fled. An immediate and diligent search was made for him, but he could not be found until the second day, when he was discovered still hiding in a grove near by, for he was totally ignorant of the way he ought to take. They brought him immediately to the patriarch. When he arrived, he was met by reproaches and revilings, and the servants by order of the patriarch, beat him, and put him in confinement. This was at Diman, a pleasant, airy situation belonging to Cannobeen, and about an hour's distance from it. Soon after this, he was taken to the latter place, where he was left a little more at large, but was always under the watch of a keeper.

"One evening, when all had gone into the chapel for prayers, he lay as if he had been asleep, and the monk, his keeper, thinking him, really so, went in with the rest, but took with him, as a precaution, Asaad's silver inkhorn, supposing that if he should wake and think of escaping, he would not be willing to leave behind him so valuable an article. When Asaad saw that all were gone, knowing the length of their prayers he at once left the convent, and ran about an hour's distance. People were despatched in search of him with all diligence, but they returned without finding him. On account of his ignorance of the way, he remained secreted near the road till the day broke, when he continued his flight until he had reached the distance of three hours or more from his prison, when a couple of men in the service of the patriarch, having been apprised of his escape by the pursuers during the night, discovered him, and called out, 'Who are you? Are you

Asaad?' He replied, 'I am Asaad.' They at once took him into custody, and brought him back, but without any violence or indignity, to the patriarch. A different treatment, however, awaited him at the convent. He had no sooner reached it, than they covered him with insult, beating him, and mocking him, and saying, 'Fool that you are, why did you answer to your name?' He replied, 'God has laid a curse upon the lying mouth, and therefore I cannot use it.' They said, 'If you do not return to your faith and hold to all that has been ordained by the church and the fathers, you are ruined. You will die under your tortures, and go to perdition.' He replied, 'Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved. I am willing to expose myself to every indignity and suffering for the sake of him who loved us, and shed his precious blood for our salvation. These things I am bound to say and do, and I am bound to exhort you, also, as beloved friends.' When he had said this, they all laughed him to scorn, called him a mad man, and were about to beat him for attempting, as they pretended, to make heretics of them also. When he saw their anger he cried out, 'Why are you enraged at me, and what are you about to do to me? I am a dying man like yourselves, and preach unto you that you should turn from your vanities unto the living God, who made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that are therein.' They then renewed their cries that he was mad, and thrust him into his prison room, and locked the door upon him, and strict orders were given that no one should say any thing to him more or less. In this state he remained for some days. The patriarch then sent to him to inquire after his faith, especially respecting his trust in the images of the church, declaring to him that without faith in these, he could not be saved. He replied, 'Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels.' They brought him proofs from the councils, that images were used by the fathers, and ought to be set up and worshipped in the churches, in honor of the saints, and to obtain their intercession. He answered, 'I will also bring you proof from the councils, that the worship of images, and all use of them in the churches, was forbidden and reprobated by the fathers.' Here they contradicted him. 'Be it as it

may,' said he, 'it is impossible for me to follow the opinions of any man or set of men, and leave the word of God behind me. This word tells me, that *forasmuch as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art or man's device.*' The messengers then quit him, and made their report to the patriarch, who left him in his prison for a considerable time in the most abject and suffering state.

"In process of time, certain individuals, possessed of a little humanity, became interested in his situation, sympathised in his sufferings, interceded for him, and procured liberty to open the prison door, so that any one who chose could go in and see him without restraint.—Again he began to meditate an escape, and on a certain evening set off from the convent. But, as before, his ignorance of the proper path to escape in, prevented the accomplishment of his purpose. He soon saw the lighted torches streaming off in every direction in search of him, and, to avoid his pursuers, turned aside a short distance, and climbed into a tree. From this situation he did not dare to come down till the night was fairly gone, when he shifted the position of his clothes, turning his cloak inside out, using his turban for a girdle and his girdle for a turban, and took his way. He had, however, not proceeded far, when one of the patriarch's men discovered him, and called out, 'Asaad, is it you?' He answered, 'It is I.' The man immediately caught him, like a greedy wolf, bound him, beat him, and drove him before him, as a slave, or a brute, to Cannobeen. On their way they were met by many others who had been sent off in quest of him, who all united with the captor in his brutal treatment. On his arrival, the patriarch gave immediate orders for his punishment, and they fell upon him with reproaches, caning him and smiting him with their hands; and so it was, that as often as they struck him on one cheek, he turned to them the other also. 'This,' said he, 'is a joyful day to me. My blessed Lord and Master has said, *Bless them that curse you, and if they strike you on the right cheek, turn to them the left also.* This I have been enabled to do, and I am ready to suffer even more than this for him, who was beaten, and spit upon, and led as a sheep to the slaughter, on our account.' When they heard this, they fell to beating him anew, saying,

‘Have we need of your preaching, thou deceiver? Of what avail are such pretensions in one who is in the broad way to perdition?’ He replied, ‘He that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, hath eternal life.’ ‘Ah,’ said they, ‘this is what blinds you. Your salvation is BY FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST; thus you cast contempt on his mother, and his saints; you deny the presence of his holy body on earth;’—and they threw him on the ground, overwhelmed with the multitude of their blows. For three successive days, he was subjected to the bastinado, by order of the patriarch, who, after that, summoned him to his presence, and demanded of him his faith. He answered, ‘I am a Christian, a follower of Jesus of Nazareth.’ Those present exhorted him to acknowledge the intercession of the saints, and to repair to them for help in this hour of trial. But he refused, saying, ‘My help is in him who shed his blood for sinners.’ ‘But have the saints,’ said they, ‘no intercession, and is it vain to worship them, and pray to them?’ He said, ‘We are not taught to seek help or protection from any, but from him who is the Great Shepherd, who has said with his own blessed mouth, *Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* To any other than God, we are not commanded to pray or seek for refuge.’

“They then returned him to his prison, as before. Those who sympathized with him, went and begged him to confess that the canons of the councils were binding on all Christians, and that the images were very properly made use of in the churches. He answered, ‘Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man.’ At this they turned away from him in despair and disgust, and reported to the patriarch that he was in a most settled state of obstinacy, and was doubtless possessed of a devil.

“Upon this, the patriarch ordered him to be put in chains, and the door to be barred upon him, as formerly, and his food to be given him in short allowance. In this condition he remained till he was much reduced, and began to entreat them to have pity on him and take off the irons from his feet, and open the door of his prison. Some were moved by his supplications, interceded for him, unbarred

the door, took off his chains, and left him. He arose, walked out, and sat down with one of them and conversed. He then begged the patriarch to give him some books to copy, to rid himself of the tedium of his idleness. But he refused, nor would he suffer any to hold conversation with him.

"After some days, there came into the convent two men, in the character of beggars, and wished to pass the night, but were turned away. That same night Asaad made another attempt to escape. As soon as it was discovered that he was gone, a vigorous search was made to find him, but all to no purpose. The universal cry now was, that the two men already mentioned had been sent by the protestants to steal him away for a large reward. Immediately his holiness the patriarch sent letters to the emeer Abdallah, informing him of Asaad's escape, and requesting him to guard the roads of the Kesroan, and search the neighborhood, if possible Asaad might still be found lurking in that district. Accordingly search was made, Asaad was discovered among his relatives by a couple of soldiers, was bound, and taken off to the emeer, who sent him direct to the patriarch. On his arrival, he was loaded with chains, cast into a dark, filthy room, and bastinadoed, every day, for eight days, sometimes fainting under the operation, until he was near death. He was then left in his misery, his bed a thin flag mat, his covering his common clothes. The door of his prison was filled up with stone and mortar, and his food was six thin cakes of bread a day, and a scanty cup of water. In this loathsome dungeon, from which there was no passage, and to which there was no access but a small loop hole, through which they passed his food, he lay for several days; and he would lift up his voice, and cry, 'Love ye the Lord Jesus Christ according as he hath loved us, and given himself to die for us. Think of me, O ye that pass by, have pity upon me, and deliver me from these sufferings.'

"Now when his groans and cries were thus heard, a certain priest, who had been a former friend of Asaad, was touched with compassion. His former friendship revived, his bowels yearned over his suffering brother, and he besought every one who could speak with the patriarch, that they would intercede and endeavor to soften his feelings to-

wards his prisoner. By dint of perseverance, the priest at length succeeded, and obtained permission to open the prison door of his friend and take off his irons. The first request he made of the priest, on his entering, was, that he would give him a little food, for he was famishing with hunger. The priest immediately brought him a little bread and cooked victuals, which he ate, and said, 'The name of the Lord be blessed.'

"Those present again began to exhort him to turn to the mother of God, if, peradventure, she would have mercy upon him, and bring him back to the way of salvation. He answered, 'If she has the power of intercession, let her intercede for us with her beloved Son.' The priest was very assiduous in supplying him with every thing necessary for his comfort; in particular he obtained the return of his clothes, of which he had been partly stripped; for the snow was upon the ground, and the cold filled him with pains.

"Now when the others saw the care and attentions of the priest, they said, 'You have become a convert to his heretical opinions.' But he replied, 'God has said, *Blessed are the merciful;*' and continued firm in his purpose. His assiduity was such, that whenever he left the convent for any time, he would give money to the cook to prevail on him to supply Asaad with proper food, and attend upon him in whatever he might need. The enemies of the priest accused him to the patriarch, but they could not succeed in their object, for the priest is of blameless morals, and has a good name among all.

"The priest now passed much of his time in company with Asaad; and conversed with him freely. On a certain occasion they began to converse on the subject of the cross, the priest saying it ought to be worshipped. Asaad replied, 'For what reason? and where is the use of it?' The priest said, 'In memory of the Savior.' Asaad.—'Why do you kiss the cross, and who has commanded it?' Priest.—'We kiss it in honor of him who hung upon it.' Asaad.—'But why then do you not paint the *ass* also, and pay it all obeisance, and all honors, for our Savior, when he rode upon the ass, was in all honor, and all paid him obeisance; but when he was on the cross he was in sorrow and disgrace?' The priest reproved him gently for returning such an answer, and when he saw that the priest was displeased,

he said, 'On account of your love to me, and the favor you have done me, I wish to prove to you this point, that all religious reverence and worship and service to any but God, is vain: for it is said, *He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life*, and I have to beg of you, that you will continually search the holy Scriptures, and pray as David prayed, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*' During this time, one of their enemies was standing without the door, and listened to the whole conversation. This man went immediately to the patriarch, and told him all that he had heard, and that the priest was conversing with Asaad in so gentle a manner, that he was likely soon to be won over to heresy. His holiness was startled at the intelligence, and hastening down inquired the truth of the report. Asaad concealed nothing. The patriarch, however, at first, repressed his own feelings, and exhorted him in the most winning manner he could assume, promising that if he would but return to the holy church and fathers and councils, worship the images and saints, and the mother of God, he would again immediately make him his secretary. He replied, 'With regard to the opinions which I hold, I assure you I wish to hold none which are opposed to the word of God; and as to resorting to the virgin Mary, I say, as I have before said, that if she has any power of intercession, let her intercede for us. As to giving up my opinions to the church and councils, how can I do it, so long as I am possessed of satisfactory evidence that these councils are opposed to one another? We are in no need of the councils, but have sufficient light without them to guide us in the way of salvation. Moreover I can say, that *I do* surrender my opinions to the holy catholic church, for I profess the faith of the church of Christ, and unite my conscience with it.'

"The patriarch could no longer restrain his feelings, but broke out in the language of reproach saying, 'You are a worthless fellow, obstinately bent on maintaining your folly. I give you to understand that I am clear of your guilt. You will not be taught, but love to show your contempt of the cross, and of the worship of the images, whose worship is only in honor of those to whose memory they are set up, and who labored and died in the service of Christ.' Asaad

replied, 'With regard to worshipping such things as these, it is said, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*; and as to those who labored and shed their blood for the Savior, they are above our honors, for they have gone to inherit unspeakable glory in their Master's presence.' The patriarch was more angry than ever, and, taking off his slipper, beat both him and the priest, and drove the latter from the room, and locked the door.

"After six days of additional confinement, the friendly priest again procured his release from his prison, and obtained the favor of taking the entire oversight of him. In this condition the persecuted man remains. May the Most High grant him speedy deliverance."

This account was dated Feb. 15, 1827.

Mr. Bird has reported, as a fact well ascertained, that Asaad, when he heard of Mr. Bird's arrival, with his family, at Ehden, in the summer of 1827, beat upon the walls of his prison for joy, crying out, "The sons of Ashi have become Christians, and, if it please God, all the people of the Gibbe will soon become Christians. The Lord bless the house of Ashi."—The family of which Asaad here speaks, was that of Naami Latoof, the writer of the above.

SECTION VI.

Uncertainty with respect to the fate of Asaad—his constancy—an English merchant commissioned by Ibrahim Pasha to search the convent of Cannobeen—conclusion.

Asaad never regained his liberty. It does not appear, indeed, that he was afterwards so shockingly abused as he had been, but he ever remained a prisoner. Reports were repeatedly spread abroad that he had died, before the missionaries left Syria, (which they did in May, 1828, on account of the prospects of war, and the disturbed state of the country,) but these reports were contradicted, and never gained much credence. Reports were also occasionally put in circulation, that he had abjured the protestant faith, but these were credited even less than the former, and had little currency. Why did they not produce the man, if he had denied the faith, and let the people hear the abjuration from his own mouth? Nothing of this kind was ever done, and such reports ceased at length to be heard. The chief solicitude of the missionaries,

during their retreat at Malta, was in respect to his life. On their return to Syria, in May 1830, they found reason to indulge the hope that he was still living. Such was the prevailing opinion of the people, but great mystery hung over his fate.

On the 12th of November Mr. Bird wrote:—"We have this day received a fresh report, apparently authentic, that Asaad Esh Shidiak has at length sunk under his sufferings, and gone to his rest."

In January 1831, after stating the uncertainty there was as to his being alive, he adds:—"Of one thing, however, we are satisfied—there is no evidence of any change in his views or his conduct since his imprisonment; but a great deal of evidence that he has continued to hold fast his profession; to defend the truth; to exhort to repentance all who have visited and talked with him; and to bear his sufferings with Christian meekness and patience, during the whole period of his confinement, which is now more than four years; and all this, notwithstanding that the utmost efforts which malicious ingenuity could devise, have been constantly used to bring him back to his former faith. Let God be praised for so illustrious a testimony to his truth; and let all who have sympathised with Asaad remember that his sufferings probably continue. Let them continue their prayers. Let them pray that he may endure unto the end and be saved; and that many others in this land may imbibe his spirit and imitate his faith. Surely it is not unreasonable to hope that some, even among his persecutors, may be led to a serious examination, and a hearty reception of that religion for which he has suffered, and by which, according to our best information, he has hitherto been so wonderfully sustained."

Again, under date of Jan. 23, 1832, Messrs. Bird and Whiting say:—"The state of poor Asaad is still uncertain. A prince, of the house of Shehab, [related to the Emeer Besheer,] lately assured us, that, notwithstanding the proclamation of the patriarch to the contrary, the man is still alive."

Such being the degree of uncertainty, Mr. Tod, an English merchant at Beyroot, decided on searching for him in the convent of Cannobeen itself, where, if living, he had been shut up since the spring of 1826. He accordingly

repaired to the camp of Ibrahim Pasha, commander of the Egyptian army, then before Acre, where he arrived on the 30th of May, a few days after Acre had been taken by storm. To Ibrahim he related the circumstances of the case, and presented a petition for permission to explore the convent of Cannobeen in search of the prisoner, and for a guard in the prosecution of this enterprise. The conqueror of Syria heard his statement with surprise and indignation, and granted his request. The Emeer Besheer, being in the camp, was directed to furnish ten soldiers, and, after a personal conference with Mr. Tod, gave him the following letter to the Emeer Ameen, acting governor of the mountains.

"To my respected son.

Mr. Tod, the Englishman, is now at this victorious camp, and has made known the case of Asaad Esh Shidiak, saying that he is still alive, in confinement, and that the story of his death is without foundation; and he has, entreated of the humanity of the pasha to shew mercy to the man and release him from prison. I was inquired of respecting this matter, and my answer was, 'The said man, according to what I had heard, was dead.' Mr. Tod does not believe the report; let him go, inquire, and search into the truth of the matter. He is, therefore, going to you, and our desire is, after receiving him with every token of respect and honor, that you immediately send with him ten persons, that they may accompany him to the place desired, and search for the said man, and if they find him alive, cause him to be given up immediately; and that you give to Mr. T. an express order to this effect, and that your order also require, that he be honored and respected wherever he may go; and that the men search wherever he pleases, and suffer no one to resist them; and they are not to leave him until dismissed by him; and when they return, they are to bring from him a paper to inform you of his arrival in all peace and safety, at the place where they shall leave him. This is what is necessary to communicate to you at this time, and may God preserve you. Written this 7th of the month Moharim, 1248. Your father, BESHEER SHEHAB."

These soldiers he obtained at Btedden, the prince's residence on the mountains. He had been detained at Acre, however, from May 30th to the 6th of June. The journey from thence to Bteddeen, by way of Sidon, was not completed till the 9th. From the palace of the prince to the convent, occupied four days more; so that a fortnight elapsed, after the Emeer Besheer first knew of his intention, before he was able to search the convent—in which time, it must be presumed, the patriarch had received intelligence of his approach. Mr. Tod will describe his visit.

After a journey of four days over mountains and through defiles, perilous enough to those on horseback, on the evening of the 14th of June we descried the convent of Cannobeen. It was situated on the opposite side of a deep ravine about midway up the almost perpendicular cliff. I confess I was struck with awe, when I compared the strength of its position with our little force, in case we should be opposed. It had evidently been a place of strength in former times, and even now could scarcely be taken except by being battered down by cannon from the opposite side of the valley. The convents I had hitherto seen were on the contrary easy of ac-

cess. However, there was no time for reflection, so we marched forward. I got down as I best could, on one side of the ravine. At the bottom I found what is in summer a rivulet, but in winter a river,* and after crossing it on a bridge, my servant Ahmed begged me to ascend the other side to the convent, on horseback. I objected to this display, especially as it seemed like riding up a wall, but as he assured me there was a safe, circuitous path, we mounted our horses. I rode along however, with apprehension, the road being a mere footpath and constantly along a yawning abyss. I felt my head getting dizzy, but by an effort, directing my eyes and attention to objects above me, I managed to preserve my self-possession. After a great many turns, we got near the convent, where the soldiers, by a shorter path, had already arrived, with the letter of the emeer. I soon saw that we were not to witness an exhibition of the patriarch's heroism in defence of his castle, for we were received about eighty yards from the convent by two priests, with servants, &c., who welcomed us in, and led us at once to the hall of audience. I demanded the patriarch. Paolos, a priest, who had apparently resided in Italy, answered in good Italian, that he was at vespers, but that as for Asaad Esh Shidiak, if I wished I was at liberty to search all over the convent. "But," said he, "the man is dead." Another priest came up and said, "I am his relation, I was present here when he died, two years ago." They then begged me to be seated, but I declined. They entreated. I replied, that my mission prevented my accepting anything at their hands. They nevertheless continued entreating and brought sherbert and pipes, neither of which I would receive. "What," said they, "do you take us for Mohammedans? We are Christians. There is no poison here, (drinking part of the sherbert.) They once more offered it to me, but I again declined it. I stood in this manner about half an hour, surrounded by priests and servants, who all kept silence, when the patriarch was at length announced. I advanced to meet him. On coming up he appeared troubled, but recovering himself, he began complimenting me in a profuse and vapid manner. I attempted to interrupt him, but in vain; he kept on. Then suddenly retiring, for what reason I know not, he again appeared, and we all went underneath the awning. Here he again renewed his compliments, but I succeeded in interrupting him, saying that I wished to speak with him *one word*.

"Speak," said he.

"By authority from the Emeer Besheer I require at your hands Asaad Esh Shidiak."

Here he trembled. "He died," said he, "in this convent two years ago; but as you may not believe me—Paolos, (calling a priest,) shew this Englishman all over the convent, and open every room in it for his satisfaction, and let two soldiers go with him."

It was now dark. Lights and keys were sent after.

"But stop," said the patriarch to Paolos, "shew Asaad's grave to him, and that may save the convent from further search."

"I shall search," said I, "every part of the convent."

The patriarch's agitation increased. The two priests, apparently with tears in their eyes, conjured me to show him a little respect on account of the servants.

Lights, keys, and servants were now in attendance, and we began a regular and minute search. The two soldiers, partly to show their zeal for their leader, and partly perhaps from their hunger and fatigue, set about their work in the most boisterous manner, striking with their clubs, as they passed, every box, chest, and divan, calling out, "Asaad, Asaad, come forth." We searched every room, cavern, and dungeon, the soldiers, notwithstanding my remonstrances, continually shouting, and making the convent ring with Asaad's name. The chapel alone I declined entering. We saw the room where the priests said Asaad was confined. They said the door had not been walled up. It was a cell about five feet by four, having no window, but a hole to admit the air, and opening apparently into the court. According to them the disease of which Asaad died was the dropsy. I left in the room a paper on which was written in Arabic these words, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

I remarked to Paolos and the rest, that the blood of Asaad was on the patriarch's head.

"Did you know Asaad?" said Paolos.

I answered, "No."

"Why, then, do you take so much interest in him?"

"Because in England and America, Asaad is considered like Paul."

* The river Kadeesha, (holy river) sometimes called Abu Ali. It falls into the sea at Tripoli.—Note by Mr. Bird.

"This does not concern us. You seem to think Asaad was barbarously treated, but I assure you, the patriarch is a mild man, and we merely kept Asaad a prisoner here."

Another priest said, "I am his relation, and he was put under my charge when the patriarch was absent months together. Would I have ill treated my relation?"*

I here recollected the prince's injunction not to reason at the convent. We had now finished our search, but there was no Asaad. "Shall we now go to his grave?" said Paolos; "shall we dig up his bones? Only say so, and we shall instantly comply with your wishes."

I said, "Show me the grave."

Lights were again brought, and the two priests accompanied me out of the convent, to what appeared to be a little burying ground. The way was along several precipices. Paolos took firm hold of my coat, and entreated me to take care and avoid the serpents. We went cautiously, our lights shewing indistinctly the path, and at last came to a part so precipitous that, in spite of my caution, I lost my balance, and should have had a most serious tumble into the ravine, had not Paolos held me with all his might. I could not help feeling gratitude for his kindness. On reaching another very steep place, Paolos and another priest said that they would stop there, and wait my return, unless I specially wished them to proceed. I got over, and a servant pointed me to the grave. I answered, "It is enough;" for as I had no means of identifying the remains, I did not think it best to have them disinterred.

On my return, they entreated me for a long time to sup and pass the night in the convent, as they said all travellers did. There were wild beasts and serpents outside, which might do me injury, perhaps take my life. I told them that I could receive nothing from the patriarch, and that positively I would neither eat, drink, nor sleep in his convent. At the same time I gave them to understand, that I made a difference between the patriarch and them, for in truth I was affected by their attentions, specially those of Paolos. Finding their entreaties ineffectual, they left me. I now went along the precipice, seeking for some spot where I could pass the night. I had not gone far, when I heard howling and cries not far from me, as of some wild beast in the jaws of a greater. Being well armed, however, I continued my steps until I came to a large tree, underneath which was a platform. Here I determined to pass the night. I had not watched long, when I perceived a couple of objects rise above the brushwood, a few paces from me. After attentively considering them some time, I was convinced they were men, and put myself in a posture to receive them, in case they meditated my harm. Seeing themselves discovered, they came out and looked at me some time, without saying a word. From their dress, I presumed them to be servants of the convent. While they continued staring, I heard my name called aloud from towards the convent, and in a moment after, Ahmed appeared in considerable agitation.

"Are you mad," said he, "to remain here? These men will murder you, and throw your body down the ravine. They only wait till you shall fall asleep. And if they don't, you may be devoured by wild beasts, or stung by the serpents." Here he wept, and went on—"I entreat of you go and sleep in the convent. Don't you know that the patriarch will send word of this search to the cottages below, and his people will come and murder you?"

"Let them come," said I, "I am ready. You may sleep in the convent, but I tell you I shall not."

"But," said he, "there is a place of greater safety nigh to the convent. Only come up there, and I will lie down near you."

He trembled, wept, and entreated so much, that I went up to see the place he spoke of, and finding it about fifty yards from the convent, and in a crag of the precipice, I let him spread my carpet; our arms were laid beside us; and, forgetting the patriarch, wild beasts, and serpents, hungry and exhausted, I immediately fell asleep.

On waking next morning, I observed a priest and some one with him apparently watching us from the terrace of the convent. Having now nothing to do with Canobeen, or its inmates, we mounted our horses, bade adieu to the priest, and set off.

* It may be well to recollect, that the treatment received by Asaad in the convent, has been given to the world according to the representations solely of Maronites. These representations, of course, lie open to contradiction from the patriarch; but the testimony of the priests must be received with caution, since they would have us take their word, that the patriarch is a mild man, and that no relation of Asaad would ill treat him.—Note by Mr. Bird.

This search, though in itself by no means conclusive as to the fact of Asaad's death, increased the amount of testimony in favor of it, and rendered it almost certain: and thus the matter stood at the close of the year 1832.

The case of Asaad altogether is remarkable; and in him we find proof, that there are noble materials for the grace of God to operate upon in Mount Lebanon. His faith and constancy appear to have been of the highest order. The anathemas of his church, the tears of his half-distracted mother, the furious menaces of brothers, uncles, and townsmen, the general odium of an extensive acquaintance, imprisonment, chains, the torturing bastinado, exposure in the most abject and suffering condition to the coarse insults of a misled and vicious populace, and the malignant revilings of a tyrannical priesthood—all had no power to shake the constancy of his attachment to the truth, and of his faith in God. The spirit he manifested was that of a martyr; and, if our information concerning him be correct, he died a martyr, and his memory will be blessed.

His statement of his religious sentiments, and of the treatment he had received from the dignitaries in his church, contained in the former part of this paper, indicates powerful talents, great presence of mind, a sincere desire to find the truth, and a heroic zeal in its defence. The same is apparent in his letters, and indeed in the entire history of this reformer, from the period of his conversion. And how meek was his spirit! *When, like his Lord and Master, he was reviled, he reviled not; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

There is a liberty
Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the pow'rs
Of earth and hell confed'rate take away;
A liberty, which persecution, fraud,
Oppression, prisons have no power to bind,
Which whoso tastes can be enslav'd no more.
'Tis liberty of heart, deriv'd from heaven,
Bought with His blood, who gave it to mankind,
And sealed with the same token. It is held
By charter, and that charter sanction'd sure
By th' unimpeachable and awful oath
And promise of a God.



